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US First Lady Jill Biden (second left) and Olena Zelenska, spouse of Ukrainian's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, at a school in Ukraine | AP

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60 FEARED KILLED AS RUSSIA STRIKES SCHOOL IN UKRAINE

The school in east Ukraine's Lugansk region was sheltering about 90 civilians when it was hit by an air strike on Saturday

BUILDING FULLY DESTROYED: LOCAL LEADER

The attack completely destroyed the school in the village of Bilohorivka, Lugansk regional governor Sergii Gaidai wrote on Telegram. Thirty people have been rescued by emergency personnel. However, some 60 people still trapped beneath the debris "are probably dead", Gaidai wrote. Meanwhile, Russian shelling killed two boys in a nearby town | P9

11 MISSING AFTER ATTACK ON HOUSE

- Rescue workers were also looking for survivors beneath the rubble of a house in Shepilivka, a village not far from the school. The house was sheltering about 11 civilians when it was hit by a missile
- Russian attacks have intensified ahead of the May 9 Victory Day — the anniversary of the Soviet Union's defeat of Nazi Germany

1st Lady

JILL BIDEN MADE A SURPRISE VISIT TO UKRAINE ON SUNDAY

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

People loot a truck transporting cooking gas cylinders in Colombo on Sunday, after waiting in queue overnight for fresh refills | AFP

Top oppn party turns down offer to lead SL govt

Mahinda booed during his first public outing since protests began; people loot LPG truck

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

SRI Lanka continued to remain in flux on Sunday with the most powerful Opposition party rejecting embattled President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's offer to head an interim government. In other words, the president was prepared to sacrifice elder brother Mahinda, the current premier, to save his chair.

"Our leader Sajith Premadasa refused to accept the president's offer," Tissa Attanayake, the national organiser for Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) revealed. The offer came amid a fresh round of Emergency Gotabaya clamped since Friday midnight as peaceful protests by students kept snowballing and a strike by trade unions brought the entire nation to a virtual standstill.

The SJB, however, said it was willing to support a proposal suggested by the nation's bar association to form an interim government for 18 months that would set in motion the process of abolishing the presidential system of governance.

Apparently Gotabaya had called up Premadasa over the phone to tap him on leading the interim government but without yielding on his presidential powers. Both the powerful Buddhist clergy and the breakaway group from the ruling coalition have demanded the formation of an interim government.

Meanwhile, Mahinda Rajapaksa got a sense of the intensity of anger on the streets against his ruling family on Sunday during his first public outing since nationwide protests erupted, as he booed and jeered, AFP reported.

Mahinda was visiting one of the holiest of Buddhist temples in Anuradhapura, 200 km north of Colombo. Dozens of people carried handwritten placards and chanted slogans demanding that 'thieves' be banned from the sacred city. "We will worship you if you stand down (as prime minister) and leave," one man shouted.

The police had to move in to clear the road for Rajapaksa's convoy of six vehicles.

In Colombo, a truck transporting cooking gas was looted by people waiting in an overnight queue for refills. The outnumbered police watched helplessly as men clambered onto the truck and got away with 84 cylinders of liquid petroleum gas, officials said.

Retiring judge may get to chair Central water body

SHAHID FARIDI @ New Delhi

THE Union government is likely to appoint Supreme Court judge Vineet Saran, who is retiring on May 10, as the next chairman of the Central Water Commission (CWC). He is already chairman of the Ravi Beas water tribunal that is dealing with the knotty Sutlej-Yamuna link canal project.

The term of the present CWC chairman, Dr R K Gupta, is coming to an end soon and Justice Saran will take over from him, according to highly placed sources. The CWC is primarily responsible for the control, conservation and utilisation of water throughout the country and works for the resolution of disputes over sharing of water between states.

Resolving inter-state water disputes is one of the critical functions of the CWC. All major river basins are of inter-state nature. When one state builds a dam on an inter-state river, it affects interests of the other basin states. This leads to inter-state differences with regard to use, distribution and control of river water. India has seen as many as nine major Inter-State River Water Disputes Tribunals so far. Water is a contentious subject and CWC plays a critical role in resolving disputes arising over it.

Vineet Saran

However, water disputes resolution is only one of over a dozen other important responsibilities of the CWC.

The Union government hopes to be able to build rules and protocols with the help of Justice Saran's legal expertise to avoid future disputes.

Justice Saran would bring to the CWC 40 years of experience in dealing with disputes and upholding the rule of law. He practised law in the Allahabad High Court from 1980 till 2002 on the constitutional, civil and criminal sides, before being appointed as a permanent judge in the Allahabad High Court on February 14, 2002, where he served for 13 years. He was then transferred to the Karnataka High Court on February 16, 2015 from where he was promoted as the Chief Justice of Orissa High Court on February 26, 2016. He was elevated to the Supreme Court in August 2018.

Khalistan flags at Himachal House wall

HARPREET BAJWA @ Chandigarh

Mischief was clearly afoot in Himachal Pradesh as Khalistan flags were found tied to the main gate and the boundary wall of the state's Legislative Assembly complex in Dharamshala on Sunday. The state will go to polls later this year.

The harried police removed the flags and registered a case. There were no security guards or CCTV cameras near the gate, which ought to have encouraged miscreants to put up the flags, sources said. The police had earlier written to the Assembly Secretariat requesting that CCTV cameras be installed in the outer periphery of the complex, but no action was taken, sources said.

Khalistan flags on the main gate of the Himachal Assembly | PTI

A shocked Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur condemned the incident, cowardly. "Since the winter session of the Assembly alone is held there, tight security cover is required during that time alone," he tweeted.

Last year, the police found pro-Khalistan graffiti on boulders and parapets on the roads connecting Anandpur Sahib and Naina Devi. In July last year, the Sikhs For Justice (SJF), a US-based secessionist outfit, had threatened the Himachal chief minister saying he will not be allowed to hoist the Tricolour on Independence Day. It turned out to be an empty threat. Last month, the SFJ leader Gurpatwant Singh Pannu had called for hoisting the Khalistani flag in Shimla.

RUSH AHEAD OF POLLS

CM meets DCs, pushes for execution of budget works

ENS @ Bengaluru

With just around 10 months left for the Assembly elections and the clock ticking away, the BJP government is dashing to the finish line. Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Sunday called for a meeting of deputy commissioners of all districts and told them in no uncertain terms that they have to let go of their sarkari mindset and have to perform.

Insiders said this is Bommai's own "booster dose" to top bureaucrats as he was reviewing the progress of works announced in the state budget.

He asked the DCs to work efficiently and in a time-bound manner, and to avoid the dreaded "nale banni (come tomorrow)" at government offices. The government will support any initiative they take up to help the poor, Bommai said, adding, "Such projects will give you a sense of satisfaction and will change the perception of the people towards the government," he said. P4

Aasha attends sister's wedding virtually

SHILPA P @ Bengaluru

THE family of acid attack victim Aasha (name changed) completed her sister's wedding on Sunday. The event, which was supposed to be a happy occasion, turned into a mere ritual, as the bride's sister Aasha is lying in ICU at St John's Hospital.

While her sister had agreed to go ahead with the marriage only if Aasha didn't cry, the acid attack victim struggled hard to hold back her tears even as she attended the wedding reception virtually on a video call from the mobile phone of her cousin.

As both Aasha and her family members could not control their emotions, the video call was stopped after the ceremony that was held between 7 pm and 9 pm. The family decided not to hurt Aasha further and avoided making a video call to her between 9 am and 9.30 am on Sunday when the muhurtham was fixed.

As per Aasha's wishes, the family members packed the wedding lunch and sent it to her. Aasha's aunt, in whose house the accused Nagesh was staying on rent seven years ago, has been next to Aasha since April 28, Aasha's uncle Sundaresh said.

CONTINUED ON P2

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744 TO 814	12.05.2022 ; 6.00 pm IST	13.05.2022 ; 6.00 pm IST
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EXPRESS READ

CMO clears BBMP budget, ups it by Rs 377 crore

Bengaluru: The CMO late on Saturday night approved the BBMP budget and increased the amount by Rs 377.50 crore. With an opening balance of Rs 5.58 crore, the BBMP on March 31 released a budget outlay of Rs 10,484.70 crore, and the government has okayed Rs 10,861.78 crore. P2

HK Patil writes to Speaker on fairness of EVMs

Bangalore: While there has been much complaining from many politicians about the fairness of EVMs, a senior Congress leader HK Patil has shot off a letter to the Speaker Kageri to have the matter intquired into. HK Patil has also pointed out that about 19 lakh EVMs are missing. P4

Faf, Hasaranga set up RCB victory against SRH

Mumbai: Faf Du Plessis (73 n.o) Wanindu Hasaranga (5/18) played an instrumental role as Royal Challengers Bangalore beat Sunrisers Hyderabad by 67 runs to go fourth on the points table on Sunday. RCB finished with 192/3. Sunrisers, in reply, were floored by Hasaranga and were all out for 125. P11

LIFE IN PRISON PART-1

IT'S FAR FROM ROSES TO BE A WOMAN, AND PREGNANT AT B'LURU CENTRAL JAIL

*All is not well with women prisoners in Bengaluru Central Prisons at Parappana Agrahara. In a structure that is designed for male prisoners, women get marginalised. Their needs and problems become secondary, even as the number of women prisoners is rising considerably. With at least 20 of them crammed in each barrack and lacking proper care, helpless women prisoners are crying for attention. In this two-part series, **The New Indian Express** highlights the apathy of incarcerated pregnant women, many of whom end up delivering premature children or children with low birth weight, while some suffer even miscarriage. The other issue is about how these women need vocational courses, training and industries to come in so they can earn money to feed their children and families outside the prison.*

CHETANA BELAGERE @ Bengaluru

THE condition of women prisoners, who are pregnant, at the Bengaluru Central Prisons at Parappana Agrahara needs immediate attention.

Adjusting in a cramped space with just two bed sheets and one pillow to sleep on the floor, with the same food every other day, and filled with despair, anxiety and tension, pregnancy behind bars is not a pleasant experience for women who have wronged.

CONTINUED ON P5

We are building a new space to house around 1,000 prisoners. All activities are being chalked out for women prisoners. It will be ready in about a year. We are giving utmost care for women in our prisons. Except for space constraints there is no other problem.

Alok Mohan, DG, Prisons